

RECOGNITION OF THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE EVACUATION AND INTERNMENT OF JAPANESE AMERICANS

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OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 21, 2012

Ms. SPEIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commemorate the 70th Anniversary of the evacuation and internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II.

The philosopher George Santayana once said: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Yet, during wartime, our nation repeatedly sacrifices civil liberties to appease unwarranted fears. As the United States fought against tyranny abroad, our government detained American citizens of Japanese descent, solely because of their race.

In 1942 Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, calling for the exclusion and internment of all Japanese Americans on the West Coast. Kiyō Yoshimura was one of the people interned. In 1942 government officials ordered Yoshimura and her family to board a bus, without telling them where it would take them.

They arrived at Tanforan, a horse stable, where they would live for about six months before being shipped off to a more permanent internment camp in Utah. At Tanforan they lived behind barbed wire, smelling the manure from the horses that had previously inhabited the same space. They were denied the dignity of privacy as they bathed or used the bathroom in public latrines. They were treated like enemies of the state and debased like animals.

The United States government interned 8,000 families at Tanforan, and 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry were sent to internment camps along the Pacific Coast. These Japanese-Americans were hardworking, law-

abiding people. Some of them served in the military and fought in Europe.

Most Japanese Americans chose to remain silent about their experiences at internment camps, but it had a lasting impact on them. The government took their homes and their possessions. They had to find new jobs, build new communities and pick up the pieces of their broken lives.

In 1988 Ronald Reagan signed legislation apologizing for the internment of Japanese Americans. The law stated that government actions were based on race prejudice, war hysteria and a failure of political leadership. Japanese Americans received reparations.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that the House of Representatives join me in commemorating the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. During this dark period of our nation's history fear eclipsed freedom and as national leaders, it is our duty to ensure that this never happens again.